Informal Analysis

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What is the rhetorical context?

In her article “Reassigning Meaning”, Simi Linton addresses some of the modern issues, societal and political, that affect disabled people. She asserts, “the present examination of disability has no need for the medical language of symptoms and diagnostic categories” (223). Instead, Linton believes that society needs to be shown what its part is in the movement to ‘reassign meaning’ to the label ‘disabled’.

Who are the intended readers?

The audience with whom the article would be most effective is the able-bodied general public. Readers are likely to be sympathetic with many of Linton’s viewpoints, but also confused by others.

What is the subject matter?

First, Linton addresses the problem at hand, stating in her first sentence that the problems that disabled people face are not physical, but social. She explains how the term ‘disability’ can be viewed many different ways. It can be considered a deficit, an obstacle, a disgrace, a physical impairment, etc. She argues that these all carry an assumption that the disability is a source of constant, uninterrupted torment, and that a person is more affected by their identification with the disability than by the actual disability.

How does the author present the text?

Linton first states her purpose, then gives the reader examples of how the terms used to describe disabilities are creating implications that are not necessarily accurate. She goes on to appeal to emotion, explaining how disabled people are generally more affected socially than they are physically, sometimes unable to fit in with their own families.

Does the text succeed in accomplishing the author’s purpose?

Personally, I thought that Linton’s arguments could have been more effective. I don’t think that there are that many people who are unnecessarily ‘sympathetic’ or intolerant. I think that the article could be useful to raise awareness, but I’m not convinced that it is entirely necessary. Linton spent a lot of time criticizing, but none of the criticism was constructive.